

Connections

September 2025

For the member-owners of Brown County REA



Volume 29, Issue 9

Saving energy during peak times benefit us all

Conserving electricity during peak energy use times not only lowers your monthly bill, it can benefit our entire community.

“Peak times” refer to periods of the day when the demand for electricity is highest. Think early mornings when people are getting ready for work or school and evenings when families return home, cook dinner and unwind with electronics. When everyone uses energy at once, it adds pressure on the electric grid.

Brown County REA works around the clock to ensure that electricity flows to your home whenever you need it. Behind the scenes, an enormous and intricate system is at work; one of the most complex machines in the world — the U.S. power grid. The grid is made up of three major interconnections that span the country, each managing supply and demand through regional authorities to keep the lights on and our economy running smoothly.

Electricity comes from a diverse mix of sources — hydropower, natural gas, coal, solar, wind and more. Some power plants can respond quickly to spikes in demand, while others are less flexible. Once energy is generated, it travels through high-voltage transmission lines to local utilities, like BCREA, which then delivers it to your home or business through distribution power lines.

When electricity demand surges during peak times, it's more expensive



The U.S. power grid is made up of three major interconnections that span the country, each managing supply and demand through regional authorities to keep the lights on and our economy running smoothly

to generate or purchase power. If supply can't keep up, the risk of outages increases. That's why using less energy during peak hours is more important than ever. It not only eases strain on the grid, but also helps you save money.

So how can you “beat the peak”? Start by adjusting your thermostat a few degrees during peak hours. Smart thermostats can automate this for you. Delay using energy-hungry appliances like ovens, clothes washers/dryers and dishwashers until later in the evening. Charging your electric vehicle overnight

instead of right after you get home can also help.

Plus, take advantage of the co-op's water heater program, Cycled Air and Dual Heat programs, along with our energy-efficiency rebates. These actions help us use energy wisely.

Small actions taken by many households lead to big results. When we all work together to reduce energy use during peak times, we protect our power grid, help control costs and ensure reliable electricity for our local communities. ☺

At A Glance



**Submit your
local photos
to BCREA**

Help showcase our cooperative by submitting a photo of our service territory. Visit the story on Page 4 for submission details. Get ready and start snapping away! ☺

Energy Wise

Some energy-efficiency tax credits expiring soon; act quickly to save more

Category	Description	Tax credit amount	Date of expiration
Electric vehicle	For the purchase of a new or used EV	Up to \$7,500 for new EV and up to \$4,000 for used.	September 30, 2025
Energy-efficient home upgrades	For the purchase and installation of energy-efficient appliances or building envelope components	Up to \$2,000 for heat pumps and heat pump water heaters, \$1,200 for insulation/air sealing and \$600 for windows. Doors: limited to \$250 per door, \$500 total. Windows and skylights: limited to \$600 total.	December 31, 2025
Clean energy systems	For investments in renewable energy for your home	Equals 30 percent of qualifying costs for rooftop solar, battery storage and geothermal heat pump installation.	December 31, 2025

Tick-tock! Time is running out on some energy-efficiency tax credits.

If you're a homeowner with plans to make any energy-efficiency upgrades, now is the time to see if those projects qualify you for a federal tax credit before they expire this year.

If you've been thinking about installing new windows, purchasing an electric vehicle or other home energy-efficiency improvements you could make, refer to the chart for the available tax credits and the date they expire.

If your air conditioner couldn't keep up with this summer's heat, act now to take advantage of these tax credits, instead of waiting until next summer. Visit your electric cooperative's website to also learn about the co-op's rebates for:

- air source heat pumps
- ductless air source heat pumps
- ground source heat pumps.

In addition, explore the incentives that are available for electric vehicles from your cooperative. Call before buying or visit the co-op's website. Make sure your electric service is large enough to handle a level two charger by visiting with your local electrician.

Work with a local qualified contractor for any of these

Rebates & incentives

are available for air source heat pumps!

Take advantage of the federal tax incentives that expire this year and your electric co-op's heat pumps rebates to reduce your heating and cooling costs.



improvements, not a fly-by-night vendor trying to make a quick sale with these approaching deadlines. Following that, coordinate with your contractor for the installation or other work to be completed by the specific tax credit's deadline in order to meet the requirements. If you have questions about the tax credits, visit with your tax preparer. ⁽¹⁾


Electric pressure canner boosts your safety

If a pressure canner boiling away on a stovetop scares you off, take a look at a digital pressure canner. Several models exist in various sizes.

The digital display guides a person through the different stages. Use it to process meats, poultry, fish, vegetables and other low acid foods. It doubles as a boiling water canner for jam, pickles and salsa too. Plus, you can use it to preheat jars.

A 12-quart Presto model costs around \$370, but can hold eight pints or 5 quarts for pressure canning. A 9.5 quart NESCO model runs about half the cost and holds four wide-mouth quarts. Besides pressure canning, the unit can be used for pressure cooking, steam cooking and slow cooking. Shop at Ace Hardware, Walmart or online.

A digital pressure canner features a built-in safety lock lid with an automatic float lid to identify the pressure, eliminating the guesswork. The unit typically features a removable, dishwasher-safe cooking chamber.

Balance food safety and your safety with this versatile, efficient electric appliance. 



You'll be a fan of this new way to can — introducing the electric pressure canner. Let the sensor monitor the process for the precise temperature and pressure for safe food processing.

Safety

Farmfest electric safety demonstrations inform

Crowds gathered around for the electric cooperatives safety demonstrations at Farmfest August 5-7.

Several electric cooperatives provided line crews. They demonstrated:


- using a grapefruit as a human heart and then contacting a power line. Cutting it in half shows the damage from an electrical contact, indicating damage from an internal electrical burn. (See bottom photo.)

- using a brat touching a power line to demonstrate how a human finger or limb is burned. (See top photo.)

- using their safety gear to show how line crews work safely around power lines and substations.

- allowing students to put on the boots, climbing gaffs and hooks to climb a few feet up a power pole.

- explaining what to do in a car or farm machinery contact accident; stay put and call for help; if it catches on fire, a person needs to hop away, but to not touch the vehicle and ground at the same time. If you must leave the vehicle or equipment, jump free and clear. As always, stay away from downed power lines at least 30 to 50 feet.

This safety demonstration was located across from the Touchstone Energy booth in the white tent. See prize winners on Page 7. 



Sparks and fire flew through the air as line crews demonstrated different electrical safety aspects at Farmfest.



Brown County Briefs

Efficiency tip

Take advantage of “shoulder months,” which refer to the transitional periods between peak heating and cooling seasons. During the fall, these milder weeks typically occur between September and November. Shoulder months offer a great opportunity to reduce home energy consumption as the need for extensive heating or cooling is reduced. Look for simple ways to boost indoor comfort without running your heating and cooling system. Use ceiling fans and open windows on breezy days to ventilate your home. On cooler days add a layer of clothing and avoid running the heat.

Adding load this fall or an electric vehicle?

Are you planning to install, modify or replace electric equipment this fall at your home, business or farm? Purchasing an electric vehicle and adding a charger? If so, please contact Brown County REA with the details of your project as soon as possible.

By contacting the cooperative we can ensure:

- Our equipment is sufficiently sized to handle your new project.
- You and your neighbors will not experience power quality issues because of the additional load.
- The work to be completed is efficiently scheduled to eliminate delays.
- Your project costs are kept to a minimum.

By working together, we can help your project go as smoothly as possible. If you have questions regarding your electrical installation or modification, please call Brown County REA at 794-3331 or 800-658-2368. ☎

Your change benefits many through Operation Round Up



The Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board distributed a total of \$7,200 to organizations, events and community disaster relief so far this year.

Funds were awarded to the Sleepy Eye Police Department, Junior Achievement of New Ulm and Sleepy Eye, Lake Hanska Lutheran Quilters, Brown County Farm Bureau, Sleepy Eye Community Theater, Pro Kinship for Kids, Brown County Fair, Sibley County Car Seat program, Floratennial Garden Club, NUMAS Haus, the Compassionate Friends of South Central MN, the City of Springfield Ambulance, the SWWC Foundation for Innovation in Education, and the After Prom Committees for Sleepy Eye Public, Sleepy Eye St. Mary's, Springfield, GFW, Comfrey, Cathedral and MVL schools.

Donations are made possible through the generosity of REA members whose electric bills are rounded up to the nearest dollar each month. For example, if your bill is \$95.52, you pay \$96. The 48-cent difference is placed in the Round Up Trust account and distributed quarterly to worthy causes throughout the cooperative's service area. For less than \$12 per year, you can help make a difference in the local area. Your contributions are tax deductible.

The Trust Board will meet again on November 11, so applications should be submitted by November 10. Organizations interested in applying for funding through the Round Up Trust can request an application from trust board members. Applications are also available on the REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop, click Operation Round Up under the Programs & Services tab or contact the office at 800-658-2368. ☎

Help showcase our cooperative and your talents! Submit your photos to BCREA!

We're looking for some stunning snapshots that celebrate the beauty of our service territory and we need your help! Brown County REA is now accepting photo submissions for use in our 2025 Annual Report and a potential BCREA 2027 calendar project.

Whether it's a sunrise over a family farm, a sunset behind a power line, animals in the pasture, fields in bloom or a quiet moment near a substation, we want to see your view of rural life and the energy that connects us all.

Photos should be taken within our service area and can highlight local landscapes, agriculture, cooperative infrastructure or everyday moments that reflect our community spirit.

Submission deadline: January 1, 2026.

Send your high-resolution photos, along with your name, contact information and a brief description of each image, to bcrea@bcrea.coop

We can't wait to see your perspective on the place we call home! ☎



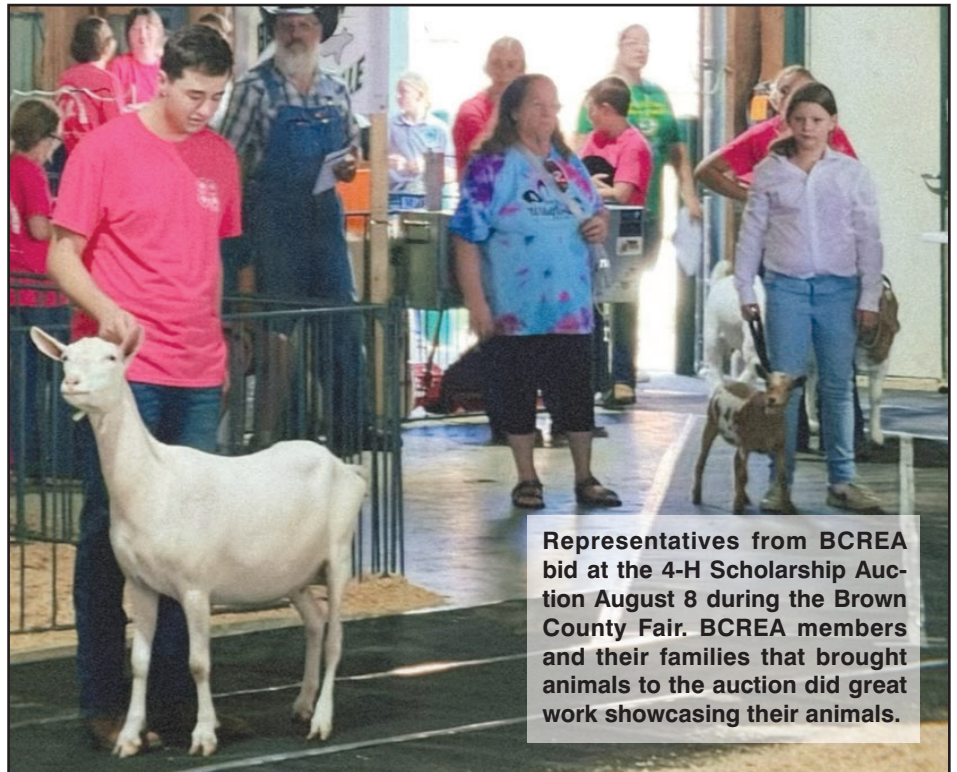
Need inspiration? Photos can be planned or spontaneous. If you see a beautiful scene in Brown County, snap a photo! Want a photo like this one? Invite a friend to take a photo shoot with your rural property and capture a special memory.

BCREA: out & about at local events in August

August is busy for Brown County REA! BCREA representatives attend Farmfest, the Brown County Fair and SummerFest.



BCREA was represented by Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and MREA at Farmfest August 5-7. At the Touchstone Energy booth (below), five electric-powered tools were given away to members of cooperatives under Touchstone Energy. Across the gravel road MREA hosted a booth where linemen promoted safety and showed off their skills. (See story on Page 3). Thanks for visiting the booths!



Representatives from BCREA bid at the 4-H Scholarship Auction August 8 during the Brown County Fair. BCREA members and their families that brought animals to the auction did great work showcasing their animals.



The Fischer family was recognized during the auction as the 2025 Brown County Farm Family of the Year.



One of our linemen drove a bucket truck through the Grand Parade August 16.

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not stop winter disconnects; know the process

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects.

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following apply:

1. Your household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by your electric cooperative or by the local energy-assistance provider.

2. You enter into and make reasonable timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

3. You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from your electric co-op.

Winter disconnects may occur

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30 your electric cooperative must provide:

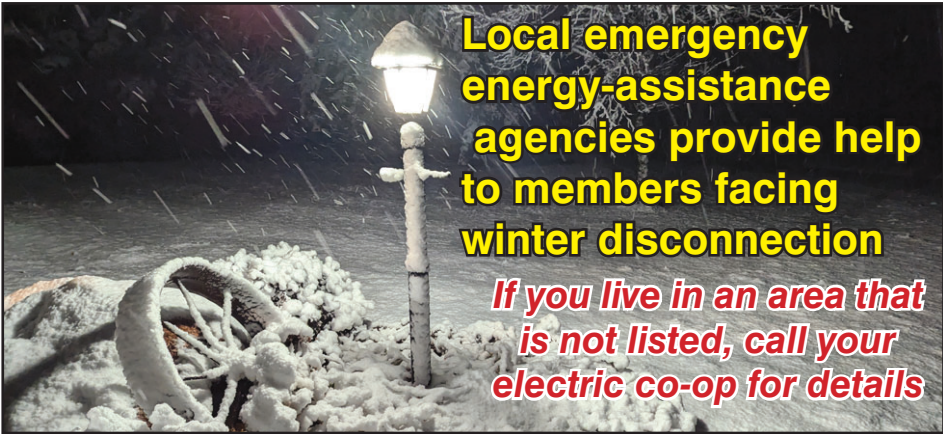
- 1. A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- 2. A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- 3. A list of local energy-assistance providers;
- 4. Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- 5. A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50 percent of the state median income to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 30, 2026.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department



Des Moines Valley Human Services	
(Jackson & Cottonwood)	507-847-4000
Martin County Human Services	507-238-4757
MN Dept. of Commerce (Ask for fuel assistance)	1-800-657-3710
Minnesota Valley Action Council	1-800-767-7139
Blue Earth County	507-345-6822
Brown County	507-508-4041
Martin County	507-238-1663
Nicollet County	507-934-5224
Sibley County	507-237-2981
Watsonwan County	507-375-5748
Nobles County Community Services.....	888-807-8099
Renville County	320-523-1842
Salvation Army's Heat Share	1-800-842-7279
(Jackson, Martin & Brown Co.)	507-238-9797
Sibley County Human Services	507-237-4000
SW Health & Human Services (Redwood Co.)	1-888-234-1292
SW MN Opportunity Council, Inc. (Nobles Co.).....	507-376-4195
United Community Action Partnership	
(Jackson, Cottonwood & Redwood Counties)	1-800-992-1710

of Commerce Energy Assistance website: <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance> for more details. Online applications can be filled out online as of September 2, 2025.

- Contact your county's energy assistance provider for additional information and assistance.

Your electric cooperative exists because of you; we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact the cooperative to set up a payment plan. ☎

2025-2026 Minnesota income eligibility

Household size	1 month maximum guidelines
1 person	\$3,119
2 people	\$4,079
3 people	\$5,039
4 people	\$5,999

Households can apply online for energy assistance starting September 2 with the Minnesota Department of Commerce. Refer to their website and details are in the story.

Spice up fall recipes with cinnamon; share your best recipes

Fall means cinnamon and spice time! Share your cinnamon recipes with us, whether it's apple pie/crisp recipes, pumpkin recipes or even cinnamon rolls and quick breads. Send your favorite cinnamon recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by September 25. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us! 📧

Minnesota's electric co-ops to honor local heroes; who will you nominate?



Does someone in your community consistently go above and beyond to make a difference? Perhaps they've poured their time and energy into helping a local nonprofit thrive, assisted those in need or spearheaded a community project that has made life better for everyone. If someone comes to mind, recognize their remarkable service and help support their cause or organization.

Your electric cooperative is proud to partner with Minnesota's Touchstone Energy cooperatives in launching the Cooperative Heroes Award. Minnesota is served by 44 distribution cooperatives, covering 85 percent of Minnesota and reaching every county. This award provides an opportunity for anyone served by an electric cooperative to nominate an individual who has made meaningful, positive impact in their community.

The Cooperative Heroes Award celebrates Minnesota's cooperative values: integrity, innovation, reliability, accountability and commitment to community. Judges will carefully evaluate nominees for these qualities as they select three outstanding winners.

Each winner will receive funding to support a local nonprofit or cause of their choice: First place is \$1,000; second and third place wins \$500 each. Nominations are open from October 1 through November 15; a short application process is found at <https://www.mrea.org/programs/touchstone-energy>. Start thinking now about who you will nominate October 1! Together, let's shine a light on the community heroes whose dedication has touched lives and inspired change.

The Minnesota Touchstone Energy Group (MNTEG) is made up of co-ops in Minnesota who are part of the larger national Touchstone Energy brand consisting of 700 electric cooperatives in 46 states. Touchstone Energy cooperatives are committed to innovation, integrity, accountability and commitment to community. 📧



Minnesota law offers active military personnel additional payment options for their electric bills. The law covers disconnection, payment arrangements, appeal and an annual notice to co-op members. Similar to the state's Cold Weather Rule, an application must be completed and income guidelines exist. It's available for military personnel with active duty, deployed or a permanent duty station change.

Call or e-mail us for details about the active duty military payment options and a form to sign up. 📧



More than 500 electric cooperative members registered at the Farmfest booth. Congratulations to these winners on their Ego batter-powered tools:

- Chain Saw: Davis Schreier from Nobles Cooperative Electric
- String Trimmer: Bonita Tabbut from Kandiyohi Power Cooperative
- Blower: Roger Polkow from Redwood Electric Cooperative
- Ice Auger: Joe Koehl from Agralite Electric Cooperative
- Pole Saw: Randy Huhnerkoch from Redwood Electric Cooperative 📧

Complete Business Security

We offer intrusion protection, cameras, access control, and fire systems.

\$100 OFF

A BUSINESS SECURITY SYSTEM

A subsidiary of your local electric co-op

Good through
9/30/2025



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Brandon Havemeier
Operations Manager

Manager's Message

Meet temporary lineman Austin Nosbush

BCREA is pleased to welcome back a familiar face this summer: temporary lineman Austin Nosbush. Austin first joined our team as a summer helper two years ago, gaining valuable hands-on experience alongside our crew. Since then, he completed his powerline diploma and is well on his way to achieving his goal of becoming a full-time lineman. His dedication, strong work ethic and willingness to learn make him a great addition to our line crew.

When he's not on the job, Austin enjoys spending time outdoors, especially bow fishing. Whether it's out on the water or up in a bucket truck, Austin brings energy and focus to everything he does.

We're glad to have Austin on board again

this season and look forward to seeing where his career in line work takes him. (B)

(Above): Austin was featured in the August 2023 Connections Newsletter as our summer help.

(Left): He has come a long ways in two years. BCREA is proud to work with him again!



Crews lift power lines for two house moves recently



BCREA linemen assisted in house moves lifting the power lines for two members recently — July 23 and August 21. The moves were successful and we are proud of our team for assisting with these two big projects. (B)

BROWN COUNTY
REA

Brown County Rural Electrical Assn.
24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529
Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop

Website: www.browncountyrea.coop

Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368

Payment Line (PSN): 833-250-4481

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 507-228-8954

William Berg, Vice President — 507-766-1497

James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer — 507-829-6756

Brad Sprenger — 507-317-5576

David Wendinger — 507-276-3166

Greg Mages — 507-276-0325

Joel Christensen — 507-828-4550

Keith Hoffmann — 507-227-8006

Landon Sletta — 507-276-1899

The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting August 28, 2025. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

- Reviewed and approved the July 2025 board meeting minutes, new membership applications, member cancellations, payments to estates and assignment transfers.

- Reviewed and approved the July 2025 payroll and financial statement.

- Reviewed plans for the Member Advisory Council meeting on September 15.

- Approved amendments and updated Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) contract.

- Reviewed individual director reports including CTV updates and safety meeting topics.

- Reviewed staff meeting reports, director meeting reports and individual director reports.

- Toured Heartland Corn Products in Winthrop with the McLeod Board of Directors.

The next meeting is set for September 18, 2025, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye. (B)